IN THE SPECIFICATION

Please insert at page 1, before line 1 and after the title of the invention, the following paragraph:

This application is a continuation application of U.S. Patent Application No. 10/059,187, filed on January 31, 2002 (issued as U.S. Patent No. 6,665,508), which claims priority to JAPAN 2001-023597, filed on January 31, 2001, JAPAN 2001-035481, filed on February 13, 2001, and JAPAN 2001-400638, filed on December 28, 2001. All of these applications are herein incorporated by reference in their entireties.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 11, line 8, with the following rewritten paragraph:

As shown in FIG. 3, the toner container 20 has a bag-in-box structure made up of a box or protection case 21 and a deformable, hermetic toner bag or container body [[33]] 22 received in the box 21. The box 21 is formed of paper, corrugated paper, resin or similar rigid material, and has a space great enough to accommodate the toner bag 22. The toner bag 22 has its major part implemented by a polyester sheet, polyethylene film, or similar flexible sheet in the form of a single layer or a plurality of layers. The flexible sheet is about 80 μm to 200 μm thick and folded in the same manner as in the art of paper folding. The major part of the toner bag 22 is tapered from a suitable intermediate portion thereof toward a toner outlet downward, so that the toner can be easily discharged.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 21, line 4, with the following rewritten paragraph:

In light of the above, as shown in FIG. 3, the illustrative embodiment additionally includes thrusting means 70 for pushing up the toner container 20 set in the container holder 50. The ~~trusting~~ thrusting means 70 includes a movable support frame 71 having a generally U-shaped section and formed with a flange 72 at its top edge. A spring or biasing member 73 constantly biases the support frame 71 upward. A seal 74 is received in the support frame 71 and formed of sponge or similar elastic material. The seal 74 is adhered or otherwise affixed to the support frame 71 and formed with a slit at its center. The slit allows the nozzle 51 to penetrate into the seal 74.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 22, line 20, with the following rewritten paragraph:

As for the biasing force of the spring 73, the toner container 20 is, in many cases, picked out of the apparatus for the purpose of replacement. It follows that the biasing force of the spring 73 should only be strong enough to push up the empty toner container 20. Further, the coil spring 34 of the shutter means 30 constantly biases the toner container 20 upward like the spring 73. Assume that frictional resistance F acts on the seal valve 24 when the toner container 20 is pulled out of the nozzle [[40]] 51, and that the empty toner container 20 has a weight of M. Then, the sum of the force of the spring 73 and that of the coil spring 34 should only be greater than the sum of F and M. Further, the biasing force of the spring 73 should only be smaller than the sum of F and the weight N of the full toner container 20.